

Reformation Fellowship Notes • May 12, 2019
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Handout #13
Numbers 24, 25, 26

I. Introduction

- A. Balaam was brought in from Mesopotamia to curse the Israelites.
 - 1. He gave two oracles, but they were blessings more than curses.
- B. He is going to give 5 more oracles.

II. Number 23:27-30

- A. Balak wants Balaam to try again.
 - 1. From another vantage point
 - a) Balak is still thinking another change in technique will get the right result.
- B. They again build seven altars and sacrifice a bull and a ram on each altar.

III. Number 24:1-2

- A. Balaam realizes that YHWH is resolved to bless Israel.
 - 1. It will not be possible to get YHWH to curse Israel.
 - 2. Balaam dispenses with his attempts to weasel a curse out of YHWH.
 - a) No more divination efforts
- B. Balaam faces the Israelite camp.
 - 1. He sees the whole camp.
- C. Spirit of God comes upon Balaam.

IV. Numbers 24:3-9

- A. Third Oracle
 - 1. This oracle is from a man whose eyes have been opened.
 - a) One who hears the words of God
 - b) He sees God's visions.
 - c) He bows down before God.
 - 2. The tents of Israel are beautiful.
 - a) Their beauty is like
 - (1) Valleys stretching out
 - (2) Gardens by the river
 - (3) Aloes planted by God
 - (4) Cedars beside water
 - b) Lush and attractive
 - 3. Water (blessing) will be abundant for this generation and the succeeding ones.

4. Israel's king will be impressive.
 - a) His kingdom will stand out.
 - b) It is not clear who Agag is.
5. God brings Israel out of Egypt.
 - a) This has been mentioned two other times.
 - b) God will destroy all those who oppose him.
6. Israel is like a lion.
 - a) No one dares to mess with him.
7. Blessed is everyone who blesses Israel; cursed is everyone who curses Israel.

V. Numbers 24:10-14

- A. Balak is furious.
 1. You have blessed them three times now.
 2. Leave and go home.
 3. You get no reward.
 - a) You could not get YHWH to curse the Israelites.
- B. Balaam defends himself.
 1. I told you that I could only speak the words God gave me.
 2. I am leaving to go home, but I will tell you what the Israelites will do to your people in the future.

VI. Numbers 24:15-19

- A. Fourth oracle
 1. Begins the same way as the third oracle
 - a) Balaam is one whose eyes have been opened.
 2. At a time in the distant future, a king will arise in Israel.
 - a) That king will fatally wound Moab.
 - b) And destroy the other tribes of that area.
 3. Edom and Seir will be possessed by Israel.
 - a) Israel will be valiant.
 4. A victor will emerge from Israel who will destroy what is left of Ir.
 - a) Could be the name of a major city in Moab
 - b) Could be the Hebrew word for city

VII. Numbers 24:20

- A. Fifth oracle
 1. The Amalekites will be destroyed.

VIII. Numbers 24:21-22

A. Sixth oracle

1. The Kenites live in a rugged and relatively safe place.
 - a) Kenites were known for their metalworking.
2. They will be consumed.
 - a) Kain means metal smith.
3. The Asshurites will dominate the Kenites.
 - a) Asshur probably refers to a tribe that lived in the area.

IX. Numbers 24:23-24

A. Seventh oracle

1. Only those who God ordains to survive will survive.
2. Ships will come from the far west against Israel.
3. But they will all be destroyed.

X. Numbers 24:25

A. Balak finally went his way.

1. He presumably went home.

B. Balaam went to his place.

1. It doesn't say where he went.
 - a) He does not appear to have left to go back to Mesopotamia.
 - b) A short time later he was killed by the Israelites (Numbers 31:8).

XI. Numbers 25:1-3

A. Israelites were still camped on the plains of Moab.

1. They appear to have been there for several weeks, maybe even a few months.

B. The people began to play the harlot.

1. This harlotry was probably both sexual and religious.
 - a) Israelite men became sexually involved with Moabite women.
 - (1) Could have been part of religious rituals
 - b) The daughters of Moab invited them to the sacrifices to their gods.
2. The Israelites were in a covenant relationship with YHWH.
 - a) For them to engage in worship of other gods is a form of harlotry.
3. This happened at Peor.

“It is ironic that the Israelites may have joined themselves to a foreign god at the very site where Balaam uttered his startling third and fourth blessings of Israel (ch. 24).” (Ashley, p. 517)

- C. This was not just spontaneous.
 - 1. Balaam brought this about.
 - 2. Numbers 31:16

They (the daughters of Moab) were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the LORD in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the LORD'S people.

- 3. No hint as to why Balaam gave this advice.
 - a) Was he trying to accomplish his goal by different means?
 - (1) Trying to cause YHWH to be angry with the Israelites so that he would curse them?

XII. Numbers 25:4-5

- A. God tells Moses to execute all the leaders before the Lord in broad daylight.
 - 1. To turn away God's anger
- B. Moses tells the judges to kill those who were involved in this sin.
- C. I don't know how we are to think about this disparity.

XIII. Numbers 25:6-9

- A. One Israelite man brought a Midianite woman to his family in the camp.
 - 1. This was visible to all who were standing by the Tabernacle.
 - a) We find out later that there is a plague.
 - b) The people might have been lamenting the deaths caused by the plague.
- B. Phineas grabbed a spear and ran the man and the Midianite woman through.
 - 1. Phineas was the grandson of Aaron.
 - 2. He became the chief gatekeeper of the Tabernacle (I Chron. 9:20).
 - 3. This stopped the plague.
 - a) No mention of the plague until now.
 - 4. 24,000 people died in the plague.

XIV. Numbers 25:10-13

- A. God says Phineas turned away God's wrath.
 - 1. He was jealous with my jealousy.
 - 2. By acting consistent with God's jealousy, he defused God's anger.
 - a) He made atonement for the sons of Israel.
 - 3. Therefore, God made a covenant of peace with Phineas.
 - a) Phineas and his descendants will be a perpetual priesthood.

XV. Numbers 25:14-15

- A. We are told the names of the couple killed by Phineas.
 - 1. The woman was the daughter of a leader of one of the subtribes of the Midianites.
 - 2. The man was the son of a leader of one of the subtribes of Simeon.
 - a) In the census, we note that the number went down from 59,300 to 22,200.
 - (1) The Simeonites may have been among the chief offenders and therefore most affected by the plague that followed.

XVI. Numbers 25:16-18

- A. Israelites are commanded to strike the Midianites because of this incident.
 - 1. They tricked the Israelites.
 - a) Balaam's advice
 - 2. This will happen in chapter 31.

XVII. Numbers 26:1-4

- A. God commands a census.
 - 1. Purpose
 - a) Organization for a military campaign
 - b) To certify the end of the older generation
 - c) To determine size of inheritance allotment
 - 2. All males 20 and older, by household
 - a) Just like the first one at the beginning of Numbers
 - 3. There are a couple excurses embedded in the account that I will talk about.

XVIII. Numbers 26:5-51

- A. Reuben
 - 1. First excursus
 - a) Mention of Korah's rebellion
 - (1) Here because Dathan and Abiram were from the tribe of Reuben
 - b) Korah mentioned here
 - (1) I suspect that Korah was the instigator of the rebellion, but the bulk of his followers were associates of Dathan and Abiram.
 - (a) That's why it is mentioned here and not in the Levite section.
 - c) This event was a blemish on their record but an event that needed to be remembered.
- B. The tribe of Simeon shows the greatest decline from the first census.
 - 1. There may have been a large number of Simeonites in the Baal Peor rebellion.
 - a) Zimri, the man killed by Phineas, was from Simeon.

- C. Tribe of Judah is still the largest tribe.
- D. Manasseh
 - 1. Shows the greatest percentage increase (63.7%).
 - 2. Second excursus
 - a) Zelophed had no sons, only daughters.
 - b) This presents a problem that will be addressed in the next chapters.
- E. Total
 - 1. Total declined 0.3%.

XIX. Numbers 26:52-56

- A. Inheritance needs to be allotted in proportion to the size of tribe.
- B. Given by drawing lots

XX. Numbers 26:57-62

- A. This is an enumeration of all Levite males one month or older.
 - 1. Korah is not mentioned here,
 - a) But family is mentioned; his family was not wiped out.
 - 2. Most of the enumeration is devoted to tracing high priesthood.
 - 3. They receive no inheritance of land.

XXI. Numbers 26:63-65

- A. None were in this census who were in the first census.
 - 1. Except Joshua and Caleb
- B. That means everyone younger than 60
- C. This marks the official end of that generation.

XXII. Conclusion

- A. Comment about Phineas
 - 1. Moses was always merciful with God's mercy; Phineas was jealous with God's jealousy
 - 2. We are called to be merciful when God would be merciful and punitive when God would be punitive.
- B. This census officially marks the end of the older generation.
 - 1. Everything up to this point in Numbers is the story of that generation.
 - a) Even Baal Peor is on them.
 - 2. Everything from here on is the younger generation.

C. Reflections on first generation

1. They saw a lot of God's hand at work.
2. Most significant event in history
3. Complained and were ungrateful
 - a) Never truly in danger of dying
 - (1) Deuteronomy 2:7
 - b) But they allowed their fears to run away with them.
 - (1) This is easy to identify with.
4. We all would have done the same kinds of things.
 - a) They were an everyman.
5. What is important is God's response to them.
 - a) Patient
 - b) Forgiving
 - c) Determined to keep his promises
 - (1) He wants the whole world to see that he is capable of fulfilling his promises no matter what.
 - (2) God is determined to bless the Israelites no matter how human they are.